The Little Valleys

Charles Mercer Hall

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THE LITTLE VALLEYS

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The Little Valleys

SHORT DEVOTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR MEDITATION IN SIMPLE FORM

BY
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TO

B. P. H.

Proverbs xxxi: 28

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FOREWORD

These are not technically arranged meditations. They are devotional thoughts that have come to the Author at random moments and helped him. So he is printing them with the hope that they may help others.

Ten minutes a day given to devotional reading will help keep alive the Divine Fire within us. We are to search the Scriptures and meditate on these things.

So the soul goes on to God.

C. M. H.

✠

The Nutshell
Bethlehem, New Hampshire
MCMXI

✠

INTRODUCTION

These meditations are full of sweetness and light. Everyone passing through any of the "Valleys" who will stop long enough under the shade of a tree, or on the bank of a rippling streamlet, to read one of these touching and tender meditations, will find the burden of care lightened.

We can only see what our eyes have been trained to see. To "see Him as He is" involves our becoming "like Him." This demands the training of the spiritual eye that its vision may be true and clear. To hear the music of the heavenly sphere, the ear of the soul must be tuned to the celestial chords which linger on the viewless air where the holy angels sing their glorious song.

A gentle master of human feeling has here touched the strings of the human heart until it responds in harmony with the Mind of Christ.

Alex. C. Garrett
Bishop of Dallas

Dallas, Texas
February 3, 1912

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The Singer's Hills . . . *Helen Jackson*

THE LITTLE VALLEYS

" Thy lovely saints do bring Thee love
Incense and joy and gold:
Fair star with star, fair dove with dove,
Beloved by Thee of old.
I, Master, neither star nor dove
Have brought Thee sins and tears;
Yet, I, too, bring a little love
Amid my flaws and fears.
A trembling love that faints and fails
Yet still is love of Thee;
A wondering love that hopes and hails
Thy boundless love of me.
Love kindling faith and pure desire
Love following on to bliss;
A spark, O Jesu, from Thy fire,
A drop from Thine abyss."

I

THE LITTLE VALLEYS

PSALMS lxv: 11

1. Consider some of *the little valleys* of life: — sickness, pain, grief, adversity, the loss of friends. Sometimes, rarely, we are allowed to go up into the mountain, and see, afar off, the land of Promise. But first we must go down into *the little valleys*.

2. *Sickness* — with its long period of anxiety and suspense, the dread of uncertainty, the touch of the Evil One. A call to Patience, Gentleness, Longsuffering. Himself bore our sicknesses. He was wounded for our sins. Sickness is a call to endurance, to a share in the fellowship of His sufferings.

3. *Pain* — a trumpet call to enter a vast kingdom, in which we may share with our Blessed Redeemer the sorrows of the world, and through our union with Him also be made perfect — perfect through suffering —

> " — the lonely midnight's woe,
> That lurks 'neath laughter in the noontide clear."

Pain that racks and rends, and bends the stubborn will — always strange, always cruel! But how often is this *Via dolorosa* the way to Peace! Sometimes it is as we pass on our way through this arid wilderness that we find the Holy Grail —

> " — the silent brave, who bear
> With smiles their burden of an unguessed pain."

4. *Grief* — Jesus wept! We think of the Widow of Nain, of the little daughter of Jairus, of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, of the Blessed Mother standing at the foot of the Cross. We think of the coming of Grief to our own homes, of the agony of loss and separation. Yet, surely He hath borne our griefs.

Stern, unrelenting Grief has been softened, and she walks in the shadow of the Angel of Hope since Jesus took her by the hand.

"— Grief's fearful, secret sword,
That hides its piercing from the daylight's face"

loses its edge as it is turned away and melts in the wounded Side of Christ our Lord.

5. *Adversity* — sweet, indeed, are its uses! It is good for me, said David, that I have been in trouble.[1] Adversity means so many things, not only the blazoned sorrows,

"That flaunt their purple in the market place,"

but nameless sorrows and the ills, and plaints, and moanings known only to the Eternal. He sees those weeping ones who share

"Their tears with others, in a mingled rain,"

and the King of Pain and the Destroyer of Adversity sees the silent brave, and when it is darkest He shows them His Face and adversity melts away in the Vision of the Uncreated Loveliness.

[1] Psalms cxix: 71.

6. *The loss of friends.* A friend is a treasure. Friendship is not to be lightly made nor readily given up. We say it breaks our heart when our friends forsake us and we know not why. But it is when our father and mother forsake us that the Lord taketh us up.[1] Perhaps as years roll on and friendship deepens, we shall be ready to learn *detachment.* Perhaps we may learn to love our friends *in Christ.* So from the little valleys of our life we shall ascend the mountain steeps, and as we lose our life for His sake we shall find it. And then the valleys shall stand so thick with corn that they shall laugh and sing.[2]

"Their source is on the mountains,
The streams of which we drink;
But we must tread the valleys,
If we would reach the brink.
Their source is on the mountains,
Higher than feet can go;
Yet human lips but touch them,
In the valleys, still and low."

[1] Psalms xxvii: 12. [2] Psalms lxv: 13.

II

BROTHERLY LOVE

HEBREWS xiii: 1

1. The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates perhaps better than any other Gospel narrative the meaning of brotherly love. Merely as human beings we are all brethren. In the extremity of need the Samaritan ministered to the wayfaring Jew. So all caste and class distinctions disappear as the individual soul stands naked before God. We owe something to each other whenever an appeal is made for help. Emperors and kings, captains of finance and soldiers of fortune, the well-born heir and the foundling child, the wise man and those we call "God's fools" — the simple-minded and the unlettered — are all precious in His sight. God made them. Whether or not they call Him Lord, He overrules their life.

2. Because God says, All souls are Mine,[1] we must hold every soul to be deserving of brotherly love. The work of God the Holy Ghost is to restore the lost Image of God in the souls of men. Not until we wake up in His likeness shall we be satisfied. We are never to say that this or that one "is not worth while." Have we not all known what the world calls fallen men and fallen women? Our daily experience and knowledge of the worlds which ripen with age, prove the doctrine of the Fall of Man. Yet Christ thought it worth while to die for the fallen. Brotherly love forbids any soul being called worthless. We have no merit of our own. Whatever there is in a man deserving of honor, or respect, or praise, or mention, or attention; whatever he has that is noble, or estimable, or virtuous has been the outcome of grace — God's free gift.

3. Let us strive to become God's wor-

[1] Ezek. xviii: 4.

thies. Let us esteem every man better than ourselves. There is a sense in which every man is his brother's keeper. Cannot we help some brother to be a worthier Christian? Is there not a *noblesse oblige* about the attitude we should take towards our fellow-men? Christ is our Elder Brother. The brethren of the Lord are our brethren. We are to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.[1]

III

GOODNESS

PSALMS cxlv: 7

1. God only is good in Himself.[2] Being God, He is what He ought to be and possesses all that God ought to possess, absolutely. The goodness of God is manifested by His attributes. Love, wisdom, power,

[1] Gal. vi: 2. [2] S. Luke xviii: 19.

justice, mercy, beauty, eternity are inseparable from the character of God, and these are manifested to us in what we call His providence. Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy works: and I will rejoice in giving praise for the operations of Thy hands.[1]

2. Goodness is something really positive, not the negative or uncertain quality we hear so often referred to in the cant phrase, "He is a good man." Goodness is Godliness — God-likeness. We should be as finical in applying this adjective *good*, or in speaking of a man's *goodness*, as in calling anyone our friend. The Holy Ghost bore witness that Saint Barnabas was a good man: he was full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. He was generous, not covetous. What an epitaph Acts XI: 24 would make, could it be written truly, on the tomb of every Christian man!

[1] Psalms xcii: 4.

3. There is a supernatural quality in real goodness — the quality of grace, which makes a good man gracious. A good man is God's gentleman. He has about him some of the atmosphere of other-worldliness.[1] He lives as seeing Him Who is invisible, as recognizing his heavenly citizenship. His will inclines to the Will of God, and love is the measure of his deeds, which are done out of a pure heart. His duty to God is his first thought always. He studies how best to perform his duty to his neighbor, not occasionally, but every day; to be true and just in all his dealings; to hurt nobody by word or deed; to guard even his thoughts. He bears no malice or hatred in his heart, for love, which is akin to goodness, thinketh no evil. He always puts the best interpretation upon the actions of other men. He judges not, neither does he condemn. He is compassionate with the mercy

[1] Heb. xi: 27.

of Christ, merciful, pitiful. He is clothed with the garment of humility. He is given to hospitality, without grudging; he gives alms as to a friend. He maketh much of them that fear the Lord. His delight is in the Lord, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, his soul becomes at length filled with goodness.

IV

QUIETNESS

ISAIAH XXX: 15; XXXII: 17

1. Consider the need of quietness, stillness, calmness, tranquillity in the daily life of a Christian. How different is the disquietude of this world, in which we are strangers and pilgrims — sojourners — where there is so much jar and fret and turmoil! In quietness and in confidence shall be thy strength.[1]

[1] Isaiah xxx: 15.

A meek and quiet spirit should be the habitual ornament or condition of a Christian's life. The spirit of the world is unrest. We pray to be delivered from the disquietude of this world. We possess a secret cause for tranquillity. One of the secrets of a happy life is that strange inward peace which assures a soul in grace of its nearness to and union with God.

2. Consider the necessity of days or periods of quietness — retreat — when the soul deliberately seeks to detach itself from the world to be alone with God. At such times the heart is quickened with renewed affections, and the soul becomes like a newly tuned harp, ready to receive the cadences of heavenly music coming from the four winds and blown by the Breath of God. At such times our hearts burn within us and our communion with God is realized. Then God reveals Himself and His Will to us; our wills become more pliant and yielding and blended with the Divine Will.

3. Contemplate the joy of union with God; of our fellowship with the blessed saints, living and departed. "All One Body We." Quietness helps us possess the Peace of God which passes all understanding. It is possible that, in a measure, this may be with us *now*. We are inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven *now:* we do not have to wait for Eternity.

4. Let us endeavor to cultivate quietness, calmness, repose of manner, gentleness in speech, softness of voice, the practice of kindness, so that day by day we may be fitting ourselves for our appointed end, our destined goal — union with God.

V

THE LOVE OF GOD

1 S. John iv: 16

1. (*a*) The Love of God transcends all human experience. There will always be a supreme difference between the Divine and

human perfections. In the Godhead all the attributes and perfections of the Divine Nature are complete, uncreated. God is Love because He is God. God is Holy, Just, Merciful, Beautiful, because He is God.

(*b*) The Glory of God consists in His being all in all. But the virtues of human nature are all created and derived. We have nothing that is not derived from the bounty of an all-loving and generous God.

2. (*a*) The Love of God is manifested in the social life of the Ever-Blessed Trinity — the Divine Family, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We see there perfect unity, peace, and concord. In the Son and in the Holy Ghost, the Eternal Father ever beholds His own Perfect Nature, for the Son is of one substance with the Father, and from the Holy Ghost flows the life of the world — He is the Lord, and Giver of Life.

(*b*) All virtues are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Through the operation of the Holy Ghost we receive Eternal Life. In Baptism we are born of water and of the Holy Ghost, we are made partakers of the Divine Nature.

(*c*) Then Christ Who is our life is given to us, and as, again, the Precious Blood is applied to our souls in Absolution, and in Holy Communion, we receive His Body and His Blood, the soul partakes of that abundant life which our Lord came to impart to us without stint. Human nature is limited and restricted; it has bounds which it cannot pass. But with God all things are possible because He is their Source and Origin, and in Him are contained grace and virtue illimitable and inexhaustible. He has all things, and all things that are ours — life and all its possessions — are His gifts. We have, literally, nothing that is our own.

3. There is a sweet grace about real

gratitude. It is often quite difficult to receive a gift graciously, and it is equally hard to say "Thank you," with fine courtesy. We are apt to be very self-sufficient. Let us practise a daily Act of Thanksgiving for the Divine Bounty, and so grow humble and truly thankful. If it be true that

"We live as we give,"

and saints and martyrs have to their eternal joy proved that maxim — let us resolve to be daily more generous in thought, and word, and deed. If Love is giving, then let us give ourselves to God by our service to His brethren, in whom remains always some portion of the Divine Image — the mark of His Love.

"I praise Thee while my days go on,
I love Thee while my days go on;
Through dark and dearth, through fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure lost
I thank Thee, while my days go on."

— *E. B. Browning.*

VI

WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM

1 S. John iii: 2

1. Like Him! A true disciple should be easily discerned by his likeness to his Master. Consider that likeness as declared by the Beloved Disciple. The reward of him who overcometh the world shall be the Beatific Vision. Prophets and kings, all pilgrims of the night, have gone on the romantic quest for the Holy Grail of the Christian. We love and worship a God Whom we have never seen. But all through our pilgrimage we are cheered and encouraged by the ever-flaming beacon of hope, and in a flash of new revelation, the wonderful meaning of the Divine mystery of His love is discovered. Our life in God is a condition of constant surprises. The Divine Imagination is inexhaustible, and the devices of

Divine Love transcend and exceed the desires and limitations of our little minds.

2. Likeness consists in resemblance, similarity. Just as a child resembles his father in looks, manner, gesture, the tone of his voice, his way of doing things, in thoughts, desires, aspiration, qualities of character, achievement. And we shall be like Him! That Divine Image is enshrined in the heart of every disciple, not to be *imitated* in the way that a mimic imitates his character, but to be *reproduced*, by the power of the Holy Ghost within us, for we are temples of God the Holy Spirit.[1] We are to be torches, bearing the flame of Divine Love to others. No man liveth unto himself. Our Lord surprised Philip when He said to him, Hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.[2]

3. So, again, we must co-operate with the Divine Spirit in the development of this

[1] 1 Cor. iii: 16. [2] S. John xiv: 9.

Likeness. We die to self and live to God. We live, but it is Christ Who lives in us.[1] Our human passions are subdued by the Divine Affections. The Christian soldier constantly wars against his fleshly appetites and his spiritual foes. The seven deadly sins — deadly because they have the power to kill the soul — pride, covetousness, anger, envy, gluttony, lust, sloth, cause ugly images to rise before us. Let us engage each one in mortal conflict, until it is overcome and we have won the victory.

4. We must not be discouraged when sometimes we fail, but we must rise and go forward. The ground is warm where the feet of Christ and the saints have trod. And the saints were men and women *like ourselves*. They endured, they fought a good fight, they persevered — unto the end. And when the end came they fell asleep, and the dream of this life vanished. We *know* that when we

[1] Phil. i: 21.

see Him we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And He will know us by the likeness we bear to Himself! Suffering and trouble and loss will then be seen to have been instruments of joy — they only do their part in conforming our wills to the Divine Will — and at length we find ourselves possessed of Joy, which is triumphant resignation to the Will of God.

"I am an emptiness for Thee to fill —
A cavern for Thy sea!"

VII

THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

S. James iii: 9

1. The Image of Christ is the Christian *motive*. The reproduction of that image is the Christian's work, in union with the Holy Ghost. Having this in mind we can say

"Labor is sweet, for Thou hast toiled;"

the toil of Christ has sweetened and lightened the labor of every task we assumed. Our aim is to be like Him. If we are to see Him as He is, we must be like Him. Other men are to find Christ through us, because they have seen Him in us. So we are lamps within which the Light of the World burns.[1]

2. Our consecration begins at our Baptism. Because God made us we are all His creatures; He is our Father. But by Baptism a more personal relation is established, and a soul becomes *the* child of God. Man is then born again and admitted into the family of God, set apart and consecrated for his supernatural preferment. The debt and obligation of the creature to the Creator is acknowledged; a covenant is concluded.

3. Three conditions determine this relationship: we promise repentance, faith and obedience.

[1] S. Matt. v: 14.

(*a*) As Jesus was made sin for us,[1] in Whom was no sin, we must partake of *real sorrow* for all sin. We must be sorry for our own sins. We each have a vicarious work to do in sorrowing for the sins of others. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.[2] Herein is love, not that we love Him, but that He loved us.[3] We love Him because He first loved us. It is all passing strange. But we must be like Him. Innocent, He suffered for the guilty. We are bound to share the penitence of our race. So also by suffering grief wrongfully are we permitted to participate in the sufferings of Christ which He left behind.[4] It is a charitable act of devotion to make an Act of Contrition daily, not only for our own sins, but for the sins of our fellows. We can individualize this act and in our intention offer it to God for another by name. This will

[1] 2 Cor. v: 21.
[2] Rom. v: 8.
[3] 1 S. John iv: 10.
[4] Col. i: 24.

help us to appreciate the value of intercession.

(*b*) By faith and by grace we are saved.[1] By faith mountains are still removed. By faith the early martyrs endured all things as seeing Him Who is invisible. By faith Christians of the present time are to bear witness to the Truth and overcome the world, and wrest victory from earthly conflict, and find that unearthly joy no man can take away. In the life of the soul we are to reiterate the Creed of the Christian, and by our constant affirmation of our Belief, sing our daily hymn to Christ as God. Faith brings knowledge. We were made to know God. By faith, too, we believe that we shall know even as we are known. The value of daily Acts of Faith deepens with advancing years, as the shadows lengthen.

(*c*) Obedience lies at the foundation of the Christian life. We must obey even

[1] Ephes. ii: 8.

where we cannot see. In a sense we shall always be like children. The questions of a child may not always be answered as we would reply to an elder. So we have sometimes to see through a glass darkly. The Will of God reveals itself to us slowly and wins approval by degrees. A right notion of *the sovereignty of God* will help us through many a dark hour. God must often deal with us as with children — we must never forget, come what may, He is our Father and He loves us. So, *Voluntas Dei* shall be our daily aspiration and our Act of Love, our daily Act of Obedience. So the Image of Christ is formed within us, and having this Ideal before us we must keep ourselves from idols and hope to say with Saint Paul, ere we have finished our course: I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.[1]

[1] Gal. ii: 20.

VIII

IMAGINATION

PSALMS CXXXIX: 6

1. Tennyson was one day leaning over a rustic bridge, listening to the purling water beneath and gazing with a poet's eye into its limpid, crystal stream, gleaming in the sunshine, gliding in and out between the sticks and stones and crevices of a woodland brook, and as he gazed he turned and said to a companion, "What an *imagination* God must have!"

2. Consider the work of Creation as instancing the infinite variety and fertility of *the Divine Imagination*, its richness, its abundance, its illimitable and boundless resource, its vast, immeasurable scope. The stars in the blue vaults of the sky — unnumbered worlds. The mountain fastnesses. The fathomless, widespreading waters of the

sea. The trees of the forest and the flowers that bloom. The Holy Angels and their ninefold choirs. Man, made of body, soul, and spirit, with a mind stamped with the Divine Image[1] — a mind to know God, a will to serve Him, a heart to love Him. Variety in unity and Unity in variety.

3. Consider some of the powers of Imagination. It is a creative faculty. It is the power of conceiving and expressing the Ideal. It is expressed in the work of the composer, the songs without words of many a great musician, or the canvas of many an artist, in the sculpture of another, in the voiceless music which a true poet has woven into the inadequate words with which he has sought to sing his song. Unexpected combinations of thought, startling contrasts, flashes of brilliant imagery now and again dazzle the conceptions of the mind of man. The Divine is ever and again shining through us, for as

[1] Gen. i: 26.

man is "a thought of God expressed in time," he always carries with him a portrait of the Divine Likeness.

4. (*a*) Imagination is of three kinds: joined with belief of that which is to come; joined with memory of that which is past; and of that which is present, or as if they were present. Because it is the image-making power of the human mind, and has the power of creating pictures drawn by fancy, and of becoming the shrine of forbidden idols, and the storehouse of unlawful desires, it is necessary for us to guard our imagination: —

> "Guard thou thy thoughts
> For thoughts are heard in Heaven."

(*b*) Our thoughts express purpose, intention, and design: it is often true that we are what we think. Our thoughts can be high and holy, or low and base. A child once told a priest in a mission that she had learned for the first time that one could sin in thought.

How unwilling would most of us be to have *all* our daily thoughts, *all* the imaginings of our hearts displayed upon a lantern screen!

5. Pray God to cleanse and guide our powers of imagination — that we may daily have grace to *think* and to do those things that are right.

IX

INTERCESSION AND MEDIATION

HEBREWS vii: 25; xii: 24

1. Consider the necessity of Intercession and Mediation. Christ is our High Priest Who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and He is our One Mediator with the Father. God has so willed it. We can only go direct to Him in intercession. This intercession is only acceptable through our High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ. He says, No man

cometh unto the Father, but by Me.[1] And, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He may give it you.[2] We have not because we ask not. With God nothing shall be impossible.[3] Ask, and it shall be given unto you.[4]

2. We love those lines in which we sing, —

> "Intercessor, Friend of Sinners,
> Earth's Redeemer, plead for me."

In them we acknowledge Christ's Office as our Great High Priest. Entered within the Veil, He still intercedes, still pleads for us. And the gifts He receives, by virtue of the Incarnation He is always bestowing upon us. We are not worthy to ask, but He is worthy not only to ask, but to receive all things.

3. It is a great thing to have a Friend at Court. It is in the Court of Heaven that we most need a Friend. There the Divine

[1] S. John xiv: 6.
[2] Ibid. xv: 16.
[3] S. Luke i: 37.
[4] S. Matt. vii: 7.

Redeemer is our Mediator — our Go-between — our Advocate. The Son of the Father's love is invincible. He carries with Him the bright marks of His Passion; the Sacred Wounds still cry aloud; His Precious Blood, poured out for us, still speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.[1] By His blood-shedding He hath made for us full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

4. So we carry to our Lord all our sorrows. The sorrows of the world are ever being laid before Him and upon Him. They are the mystical form of the Cross which He bore to Calvary. Let us go to Him freely. He knows what is in man. He is the Son of Man as well as the Son of God. The Son of Mary tasted the depths of human woe. He sees sin in all its actual hideousness, and he knows its dreadful effects and

[1] Heb. xii: 24.

consequences. From all this He would save us. Our tongue cleaves to the roof of our mouth, but as we cry, Lord, save us: we perish,[1] we shall hear His Voice. It is our little faith, our want of faith, that often keeps us back. All that Jesus has He would give to us.

5. Intercession is, too, a labor of love. We partake of the priesthood of intercession by our union with Christ.

> "More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of."

We are to do our part not only for our own selfish souls, but for the salvation of the souls of other men. We are to be instant in prayer, we are to pray without ceasing.[2] A Bishop of the Church once told us that he had days which he set apart in every year for intercession in behalf of all he had ever confirmed, praying for each of them by name. Many never pray, and no

[1] S. Matt. viii: 25. [2] 1 Thess. v: 17.

prayers are offered for these unknown souls, living or dying, save the prayers of the Church, who with charity includes all men in her intercession.

6. Resolve to keep the fast-days and days of abstinence, provided for in the Prayer Book, as days of extraordinary acts of devotion, and let these extraordinary occasions be occasions of particular intercession for others, that this charitable work may develop into a habit of our daily life.

X

VALUES

S. Matt. xvi: 26

1. *Value* and *worth* are two words deserving more than ordinary consideration from men with immortal souls. Value comes from a root meaning to be strong, to be worth. In political economy *exchangeable*

value is that in an article or product which disposes individuals to give for it some quantity of labor, or some article or product obtainable by labor. And in an artistical composition, its *value* is the character of any one part in its relation to other parts and to the whole. So the value of a man's soul to himself depends upon what he is willing to exchange for it and upon his estimate of the relative worth of the *values* of his various relationships to mankind and to God. What is my soul worth to me? Its value is to be computed by the Crucifix; we look at that and see what our redemption cost our Father. The Sacrifice of Calvary is the standard of appraisal!

2. *Worth* is that quality which renders a thing valuable — value in respect of moral or personal qualities. To have worth one must possess merit, excellence, virtue; he must in some way always be distinguished for qualities that are estimable and meritorious.

3. Our Lord brings before us the consideration of the worth of the soul, and of the value we put upon those things which, sometimes, men allow themselves to exchange for it, or for its assured salvation. Consider some of these — pleasure, riches, fame.

(*a*) *Pleasure.* How we love to please ourselves — to gratify the senses, to amuse ourselves; sport, often exciting and dissipating in its participation and effects — lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; [1] and sensuality — the pleasures of sin endure for a season.[2] We seek enjoyment, satisfaction, comfort, and delight in earthly things which are in reality fading away every moment — the fashion of this world perisheth.

(*b*) *Riches* — the accumulation of material possessions. To be well supplied with material possessions, to be wealthy, opulent, to have much goods and so to become powerful, to accumulate more than one's

[1] 2 Tim. iii: 4. [2] Heb. xi: 25.

neighbor. How many know the miser's greed for gold and hoard their wealth with Christ standing cold and naked at the door, Christ Who for our sakes became poor![1] How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of Heaven.[2] Think of dying, hugging our earthly treasures! Think of lying on our beds cherishing the notion of our riches and in a moment hearing the summons, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee!"[3]

(*c*) *Fame* — a foolish phantasm. Yet how many devote all the energies of this short life to its pursuit. How many clamor for notoriety and exchange the certainty of passionless renown for the clamorous shouts of Herod's sycophants — *He is a god.*[4] How many capable and valuable men and women "lose their heads" in the mad and foolish rush for fancied position and distinction

[1] 2 Cor. viii: 9.
[2] S. Mark x: 23.
[3] S. Luke xii: 20.
[4] Acts xii: 22.

and celebrity! And we are the servants of Christ Who made Himself poor and of no reputation![1]

4. We mostly purchase our notion of *values* in the school of bitter experience. One by one, God takes from us or denies us the things upon which we have set our hearts, that we may learn to appraise these at their true value and realize that in God alone we shall find the true pleasures, the true riches, — that by doing *without* these perishing things, we may be numbered with those whom the King delighteth to honor.[2]

It is the Christian's task to learn to suffer the loss of all things that he may win Christ. Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.[3]

[1] Phil. ii: 7. [2] Esther vi: 6. [3] S. Mark viii: 35.

XI

BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

PSALMS CXXXVII: 1

1. The state of a man who is living in sin knowingly is that of an exile from home. He has expatriated himself: he is, like Benedict Arnold, a man without a country. He has no home; he has become an alien to his own kindred. He has gone out and closed the door after him. His lovers and friends stand afar off. In his heart he feels like a leper, and his soul cries out, Unclean, unclean! While in this state he cannot know gladness. Joy has departed. The light has gone out, the way is dark, and the guilty sinner is, indeed, far from home.

2. Babylon and Egypt are types of what we renounce in Holy Baptism as the world and sin. But the sinner forgets that the life of a Christian is a life of renunciation.

Who has not come in contact and in conflict with the pomps and vanity of this wicked world and, at least, some of the sinful lusts of the flesh — the vain pomp and glory of *the world?* Day by day the ostentatious splendor and glitter of the world passes before us, like the pageantry of a solemn procession, but its objective point is Babylon, not Jerusalem. It fascinates, enchants, bewitches us, and if we do not rouse ourselves from its spell, it exerts an irresistible and uncontrollable influence upon us. It is all *vain* pomp we know—empty, worthless, unsatisfying, unreal, delusive, trifling —but the man who finds himself by the waters of Babylon, unlike the children of Israel whose exile was compulsory, has himself yielded to its allure. This fascinating world!

3. But by the waters of Babylon we may learn the value of Jordan and meditate, and repent, and long again for Zion. The

exile has wandered far from home, but in the distant land a light is still shining in the window for him. He has been holding his head down, so he could not see it. The wind, blowing where it listeth, has quivered over his dry and sinful soul, and even as he lies by the arid wayside, the Good Samaritan comes along and pours in Oil and Wine. At length he arises and returns. The gates of the City where shall be his everlasting home shall not be shut at all by day, they are ever open for the exile who will return.

4. Consider Renunciation as a daily duty of the Christian life. One of the vows of our Baptism was a vow of renunciation. Some things we must abjure, some pleasures we must reject. By the waters of Babylon we learn this, and he who once sees the Face of Christ and hears His voice calling him will abandon *all*, as he feels the compelling attraction of that in which he can

alone truly glory — the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ —

> ". . . 'tis a blossoming rod
> That drives us to grace from disgraces,
> From the fens to the gardens of God!"

XII

SURSUM CORDA

Psalms cxxi

1. Above the lintel of a little country church, overlooking the mountains and perpetual hills of one of the best known mountain ranges, is carved this inscription, *Sursum Corda* — lift up your hearts. It greets one going in and is an inspiration and call to enjoy all that is within. And going out, one literally lifts up his eyes unto the hills. The hills beyond are figures of the little hill of Calvary. Within, his eyes have beheld Calvary itself — the Christian altar —

around which pilgrims gather every day to pour out their hearts before God, to give to Him their thanks for His great glory, to praise, to bless, and to magnify Him. There, hungry souls come to be fed with the true Bread which came down from Heaven, to drink of that Living Water of Life, freely. They come there hungry and thirsty, their souls fainting within them. They cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivers them out of their distress.[1]

2. (*a*) Every Christian sometimes experiences periods of dryness. The movement of the soul becomes sluggish, and the fire of ardent spirits grows dull and smouldering. The sweetness of our religion cloys. Interest wanes. Love grows cold. It is not that we do not care, but the experience of every soul carries one through the changes of the season, Spring and Summer, and Autumn and Winter. We must pass through each

[1] Psalms cvii: 6.

season of the Christian year. Through each, *Sursum Corda* is ringing in our ears, like the note of a sweet bell.

(*b*) Spring is like the beginning of things, new joy and surprise unfolding and disclosing to our astonishment and wonder the marvels of God's inexhaustible treasure-house of grace. New flowers are always budding; some new, fresh fragrance is ever delighting us. Spring is always bubbling over with new life and exhilaration.

(*c*) Summer comes with its fulfilment of promise. The grain ripens, and the flower bears its fruit. We eat of the labor of our hands and are satisfied. We have our share in the ingathering of the harvest. We rejoice in the fulness of things. It is a period of thanksgiving.

(*d*) Then there comes a crispness in the air, and the days shorten, and the darkness gathers. Autumn comes. The leaves fall, even as sometimes our hopes wither. Nature

begins to prepare for its Winter's sleep. There is a minor note in the music of the Autumn. Opportunities have been lost, never to come again. We wonder if we have neglected the time of *our* visitation.

(*e*) And now it is Winter. The wind blows and the snow falls, and the brown earth is covered with its mantle of white. The streams are frozen. Life sleeps. A call to the sleeper summons him to waken.

3. Or we may think of the little day of our life, the seven ages of man reducing themselves to the familiar routine of every day, morning, noon, afternoon, and evening. Each season, each portion of the day with its appointed task, its appointed recreation, its trials, its hopes, its fears. But *Sursum Corda* is always ringing within us to cheer and encourage and sustain us.

"Just why I suffer loss
I cannot know;
I only know my Father
Wills it so.

He leads me in paths I cannot understand;
But all the way I know is wisely planned.
My life is only mine
That I may use
The gifts He lendeth me
As He may choose.
And if in love some boon He doth recall,
I know that unto Him belongeth all.
I am His child, and I
Can safely trust;
He loves me, and I know
That He is just.
Within His love I can securely rest,
Assured that what He does for me is best."

4. Try to believe that "to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labor."

XIII

THE PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

PSALMS xvi: 11

1. *In Thy Presence is fulness of joy.* Presence belongs only to some personality.

Before entering into a king's chamber we speak of going into *The Presence*. God is everywhere, *i.e.*, everything is present before God. But in a special and sacramental manner God is present in the Blessed Sacrament of His love, in the Person of Jesus Christ. Every church is God's House, and consequently most holy. But there is a difference, no matter what the grandeur of some stately fane or the poverty of some remote mission chapel, when before the altar burns the light to signify the *Presence of the King of Kings*, in the habiliments of Bread and Wine, with which He has willed to veil Himself. Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.[1]

2. This shall be my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.[2] The wayfarer echoes these words of David, as he kneels in the silent House of God, before the Gate of Heaven. God cannot

[1] Isa. xlv: 15. [2] Psalms cxxxii: 15.

be circumscribed or limited, yet of His own Will He became clothed in Human Flesh at the Incarnation. So in a transcendent manner God the Son hides His Glorified Humanity beneath the veil of His sweet Sacrament of Peace. Now, we see through a glass darkly;[1] then, we shall see Him as He is.[2] Kneeling before Him in the silent church, pouring out our heart's desires before the holy Shrine, encompassed, doubtless, by a heavenly company of angelic spirits, we think of the love of His Sacred Heart — His *human* heart, beating like ours. And we feel that it beats with ours in understanding our voiceless prayer, our spirit's yearnings; we find in His answering sympathy the interpretation of those strange words, I sleep, but my heart waketh.[3] My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.[4]

[1] 1 Cor. xiii: 12.
[2] 1 S. John iii: 2.
[3] Cant. v: 2.
[4] Exodus xxxiii: 14.

3. Before the Blessed Sacrament we are in heavenly places. We are nearer Home when we are in the Presence than anywhere else on earth.

"O make our hearts Thy dwelling place."

Little tokens of our love are around Him. Instead of unguents for burial, we bring the incense, and sweet flowers, and lights — little acts of reparation to make beautiful His earthly Tabernacle; raiment of needlework, the stitches wrought with prayer. Wherever God is, He is to be adored.[1] So on bended knee we adore the Invisible Presence. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory. The sanctuary is holy ground. The Christian Altar is the Shekinah of the New Dispensation. The Sacrifice of the Altar is a commemorative sacrifice. At the Altar we behold Calvary. Every day, as the faithful Priest re-presents the drama

[1] Jeremy Taylor.

of Good Friday, is fulfilled the Divine command, Do this in remembrance of Me.[1] The memory of God is in some mysterious way quickened, as the death of His dear Son is portrayed in sacramental act.

4. Therefore here will we seek Him Whom our soul desires to love. Early in the morning will I seek Thee.[2] Seven times a day will I praise Thee. Here, slumbering not nor sleeping, the King watches over His own Israel, the peculiar people of God. Let us humble ourselves before Him, and as Love begets Love, give Him of His own, for He is perpetually giving His Own to us, in every communion, every absolution, every blessing. Blessed, praised, and adored be Jesus Christ upon His throne of glory and in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.[3]

[1] 1 Cor. xi: 24. [2] Psalms lxiii: 1. [3] S. Mark ix: 24.

XIV

THANKSGIVING

PSALMS CXVI: 12

1. What reward shall I give unto the Lord: for all the benefits that He hath done unto me? I will receive the cup of salvation; and call upon the Name of the Lord. In the *Te Deum* we sing, We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory. Thanksgiving is an essential part of Prayer, a necessary part of Praise. We can add nothing to the essential glory of God, but we must pay our due thanks to the Most High, so subscribing to His *accidental* glory. All things come of Thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given Thee.[1]

2. Consider the reasonableness and obligation of Thanksgiving. The ten are ever being cleansed; the nine receive their gifts

[1] 1 Chron. xxix: 14.

as largess, so does the tenth: one in ten returns thanks. Ingratitude is one of the commonest, basest, and most ignoble of faults; it is one of the frequent sins of omission, common nearly to all, confessed only by a very few. It would be well for us to make this a subject for frequent self-examination. A daily Act of Thanksgiving would be a good preparation for a weekly Communion. "My God, I thank Thee for all the blessings Thou hast sent me, this day and through my whole life."

3. Consider the unworthiness of our gratitude: we ask God to pardon our lowliness. It is in the Holy Eucharist — the Great Thanksgiving — that our *Kyries* and *Glorias* are joined together and transmuted, by union with the Sacrifice of Calvary, into an Act of Thanksgiving worthy of acceptance by the Most High. The cup of salvation becomes the libation and the medium of our service. The Lamb of God offers Himself in

our stead, and as our High Priest offers an acceptable Sacrifice. He is our Peace.

4. Consider Thanksgiving as a joyous expression of our Love. Divine Love expends itself upon us with a Divine lavishness. The Divine generosity transcends human thought: it is clean contrary to human meanness and worldly considerations of expediency. God spared not His own Son: *so* God loved the world. From that great Act of Sacrifice flowed the grace that makes saints. A thankful heart is a mark of holiness. Words are such feeble things, but thoughts have wings, and on the wings of love the pious soul again and again can offer his thanksgivings for all the benefits of God's unceasing and unfailing generosity.

5. Resolve to make a daily Act of Thanksgiving and, as we reckon our sins, to reckon also the manifold gifts of God, for which, as they accumulate, we give thanks in our

weekly Eucharist. Cultivate a habit of saying, Thank you! Frequent Communions are our best Thanksgiving.

XV

LENT

S. Mark vi: 31

1. Lent is a season for deepening the fellowship of the soul with God. My soul thirsteth for God.[1] It is a season, too, for deepening our realization of our fellowship with the saints. We are all called to be saints, but in front of every halo we see the awful warning: Many are called, but few are chosen.[2] Yet if we are not chosen, it will be because we have neglected our Lents. The feasts and festivals of the Christian Year please us, but ease and pleasure are not to be the daily portion of Christians.

[1] Psalms xlii: 2. [2] S. Matt. xxii: 14.

God is to be found everywhere truly, but we shall find Him oftenest where there is some sign of His Cross — where are to be found some of His tokens — some of the marks of the Lord Jesus.[1] Lent is a call to self-denial.

2. Let us consider some of these marks: loneliness, temptation, self-restraint — mortification.

(*a*) *Our Lord's life was singularly lonely.* It was mostly a hidden life (much as most of our own life is hidden, except to God and the angels). Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.[2] There was the obscurity of Bethlehem, the long exile in the Land of Darkness, the hidden life of labor at Nazareth, the forty days in the desert with the wild beasts — mystical figures of our passions, stormy and rebellious — which must be subdued and brought under the Law of Christ!

[1] Gal. vi: 17. [2] Isa. xlv: 15.

(*b*) *We shrink from the trials of temptation;* not so Christ. With no other armor than that with which He clothes all soldiers of the Cross He went forth to the fight, conquering and to conquer.

"Save in the flesh Thou wouldst not come to me." In the flesh He fought our fight; as Man He battled with our common foe. Man shall not live by bread alone![1] The kingdoms of this world must be overcome; their power to inthrall us must be defeated. So, too, from the pinnacle of the Temple He would not tempt the Lord His God Whose loving Providence, even then, was overshadowing Him, Whose angels were really bearing Him in their hands. How much we are benefited by the ministry of these pure spirits we shall never know, until the day break and the shadows flee away![2]

(*c*) *Self-restraint — mortification.* Jesus Christ was God Almighty — God manifest

[1] S. Luke iv: 4. [2] Cant. iv: 6.

in the flesh.[1] But He was always holding Himself back. So with His teaching: He had many things to say to His disciples, but He would only reveal Himself to them as they were able to bear and to hear. What a rebuke to our impetuosity, to our desire to make haste, to our impatience, to our discontent with progress made, to our dissatisfaction with the few results and achievements we are permitted to see. Our Lord's sole desire was to do His Father's will.[2] Shall we not try this Lent to write *Voluntas Dei* — the Will of God — on everything that we do? We must die to self to live to Christ. Each must learn for himself the strange meaning of our Lord's words, He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.[3] We must lose ourselves to find ourselves.

3. Let us resolve to make this Lent, each for himself, a "sweet feast." It will be the last Lent for some of us; perhaps for me.

[1] 1 S. Tim. iii: 16. [2] S. John iv: 34. [3] S. Matt. x: 39.

Let me be a sharer in the loneliness of Jesus. Tempted, His strength is mine, if I will; I can do all things through Christ, Who strengtheneth me.[1] May I learn self-restraint at least in one thing. By His grace I will mortify the deeds of the body and so find Him Whom my soul loveth, in the solitary way.

XVI

THE RESURRECTION

S. Luke xxiv: 6

1. Life is made up, very largely, of contrasts. It is so from birth to death. The agonizing cry of pain is followed quickly by the crooning words of joy unspeakable — joy that a man is born into the world. So we have light and darkness, sunshine and shadow, pathos and bathos, life and death.

[1] Philipp. iv: 13.

But we sow in tears to reap in joy.[1] Pagan despair is reversed by Christian hope. Our Lord Himself has assured us that our sorrow shall be turned into joy.[2] We must press on in faith, knowing that while heaviness may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning.[3]

2. (*a*) A minor note pervades the music of Lent, deepening as Passion-tide, Holy Week, and Good Friday approach. On Good Friday, when the Lamb of God is slain, all nature mourns; a supernatural and terrifying darkness covers the face of the earth, which quakes as Life meets Death and the Holy One yields up the ghost. In the after-light of Easter we can picture the horror-stricken faces of the priests in the Temple, and we can imagine the consternation and dismay of Annas, Caiaphas, and Pontius Pilate during the Three Hours darkness. From the sixth to the ninth hour Procula's

[1] Psalms cxxvi: 5. [2] S. John xvi: 20. [3] Psalms xxx: 5.

message to Pilate must have been the subject of his unwilling meditation: Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream, because of Him.[1] Does conscience accuse me, even now, *because of Him?*

(*b*) The Body of Jesus was taken down from the Cross at eventide.[2] It had been begged of the Roman Governor. How tender and loving was the *preparation* for burial. Only loving and reverent hands touched that Sacred Body, as It was wrapped in sweet spices and a linen shroud, and laid in the new garden-tomb of Joseph of Arimathea — the Virgin Body, born of a spotless Virgin, laid at last in a virgin tomb!

(*c*) Cannot we see the cohorts of angels which accompanied the spirit of Christ as it passed from Calvary to preach, as Saint Peter tells us, to the spirits in prison;[3] for the nonce turning the prison-house of Pur-

[1] S. Matt. xxvii: 19. [2] Ibid. xxvii: 57. [3] 1 S. Pet. iii: 19.

gatory into Paradise — because of the Presence there? There we behold transports of joyous thanksgiving, as the waiting souls behold their Deliverer, for Whose Evangel and Sacrifice they had been waiting — who knows? — thousands of troubled years.

3. Then the strange, mysterious, unearthly bliss and ecstasy of Easter morning, very early![1] The Queen of Feasts, the Day of days! At the rising of the sun, the Sun of Righteousness came forth from the grave. The Body of the Holy One had seen no corruption. Now It burst the gates of Hell and rose triumphant, bringing with It the keys of Death and Hell.[2] Alive for evermore!

4. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the pledge of our immortality. The Christian writes *Resurgam* upon his tomb, because he *knows* that his Redeemer liveth. The Resurrection is also an assur-

[1] S. John xx: 1. [2] Rev. i: 18.

ance of man's resurrection in body, soul, and spirit. The frailty of our nature, frequent falls, gross sins of the flesh; higher sins of the soul, which lead to lower sins of the body; a rebellious spirit — I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven[1] — all these have in them the seeds of death. But the Will of God was the Will of our Divine Saviour, and in Him we can, if we will, live and move, and have our being, now and through the ages of the ages,

"Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven."

XVII

CALLED TO BE SAINTS

ROMANS i: 7

1. (*a*) A saint is the result of grace. A saint is one who every day strives so to conform his will to the Will of God, that, like

[1] S. Luke x: 18.

Saint Paul, he can say truthfully, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Grace is altogether the free gift of God. A saint so absorbs and assimilates the virtues of the supernatural life, that he gladly loses himself, and so finds God.

(*b*) It is a romantic and beautiful journey, full of adventure and surprise — the journey of the Christian soul as it goes on to God. To him who perseveres the Way of the Cross at last blossoms like the rose, and the solitary places rejoice and are glad, as the wayfarer realizes that He keepeth the feet of His saints. Daily he says, The Lord is mindful of His own. The Sacraments are means of grace, and the saint has used them all: he drinks deep from the well of life. He knows that his thirst will be slaked, his hunger satisfied. Someone has said that the Church can save sinners just because she knows how to make saints. In the worst sinner lie all the possibilities of the most perfect saint.

(*c*) In the picture of the Good Shepherd — the true King of saints — lies that ineffable picture of the perfect Love of God, revealed to sinners in Jesus Christ their only Hope. The love of Christ constraineth us:[1] as we waken to its reality, we marvel at its magic wonder — while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,[2] died that we might respond to the Divine call. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.[3]

2. (*a*) Consider the variety of saints — millions, as Faber says,

"In their ranks and degrees"—

just as one star differeth from another star in glory. So in the lowest as well as in the highest Heaven will the saints be found. Every people, nation, and language will furnish its divinely appointed quota, until the number of the elect is made up.

(*b*) It is not necessary that a saint be conspicuous. Often, the holiest saint attracts

[1] 2 Cor. v: 14. [2] Rom. v: 8. [3] S. John x: 11.

little notice. He has learned the secret of *the holiness of common life* — life as it is lived every day. So he goes on his way scarcely noticed, because outwardly he appears to be so ordinary. But inwardly he walks and talks with God; with the eyes of his soul he sees angels, and sometimes he hears them and the music of Heaven, and he breathes the rare fragrance of the immortal flowers that bloom in the fair gardens of Paradise. And he always lives with the air of Heaven about him.

3. Consider the patience of the saints. Patience means so many different things. It grows in such strange and unexpected ways. It has so many forms and colors — this beautiful virtue. It is born of trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, pain, calumny, adversity, love lost or never to be found on earth: great nameless troubles of the heart, and bitterness of soul. Patience grows as we clasp that blessed, particular Cross, the form

of which God alone knows how to fashion for us.

4. (*a*) Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.[1] Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect. Holiness is a passion for God and the things that belong to His ineffable Glory. Perfection, we are told, consists not in doing extraordinary things, but in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well; in going slowly; in doing all things, great or small, for the glory of God.

(*b*) A saint is a friend of God, a friend who has become a lover, whose friendship has been set on fire and burns, evoked by that Divine fire which comes from the mysteries of the Eternal — that "fierce light that beats from the Throne" of God and consumes all earthly dross, until the utmost longings of the heart are satisfied.

5. Resolve to praise God for the example of the saints, and pray for Perseverance.

[1] Heb. xii: 14.

How poor we should be with no ideals! "Ideals are like stars; you will not succeed in touching them with your hands, but, like the seafaring man on the deserts of water, you choose them as your guides, and following them you reach your destiny."

XVIII

GENEROSITY

S. Luke vi: 38

1. Consider the scarcity of generosity. It is to very many an unknown grace. To be generous is to be indeed of high degree. It implies the quality popularly regarded as belonging to noble birth. A generous person loves those things that are excellent. He is not only high-spirited but magnanimous. To be generous is to be the very opposite of niggardly, in every particular. A niggardly person is stingy, meanly close,

— one who spends grudgingly — one whose smallest gift is blighted by parsimony and penuriousness. An ungenerous person is one who hardly handles a coin that he pays out, without inwardly wishing that it might be "nigged" — its edges clipped!

2. A generous nature possesses kingly qualities. A generous man, when he can, gives as a king giveth to a king. He gives *himself* with his alms; he gives his alms as to a friend. He is open-handed because he is large-hearted. Avarice is hateful to him. Yet he is not a spendthrift, neither is he improvident. But he is lavish without being prodigal. A generous man gives generously because he loves much. One who truly loves cannot be mean, for love is giving, giving, giving all the time.

3. Generosity is one of the attributes of the Divine Nature. God is a generous God. He has been giving through all Eternity. Creation is a token, with all its wonderful

profusion, of the generosity of the Eternal Father. The Incarnation was the crowning act of this Divine generosity: God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.[1] So the Divine Redeemer gave His Life for the salvation of the world, and the Divine generosity flows on unceasingly in the Sacraments and in all the multiform ministries of love and grace. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over,[2] is the measure with which God metes out His favor towards us. Generous in His Eternal love; generous in His seeking for the erring, the wayward, and the lost; generous in His forgiveness, blotting out as a thick cloud our transgressions. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it *more abundantly*.[3]

4. The consideration of this big word, *generosity*, calls us to a rigorous self-examination of conscience. What has been our con-

[1] S. John iii: 16. [2] S. Luke vi: 38. [3] St. John x: 10.

duct towards God, His Church and Christ within her, our brethren? We need not think of what others have not done, but we can, if we are honest with ourselves, sorrow for our glaring lack of generosity and pray that we may, by amendment and by reparation in this regard, some day know that rare and secret joy that fills the hearts of only the generous.

"There came a request to give
Of my scanty means to the Lord;
I said, 'But then I must live,
And to give I cannot afford!'
I thought then of God's great love,
How His gifts abide with me still;
His home kept for me above,
And my heart then said, 'But I will.'
O soul, do you long to know,
Of the very best way to live
In this vale of tears below?
It is this — 'We live as we give.'"

XIX

TIME AND ETERNITY

ISAIAH lvii: 15. REVELATION x: 6

1. Man thinks, as we say, "in time," because he was created in time. But God is Eternal and with Him is no time. He always was, He is, and He ever shall be. He is the same Yesterday and Today and Forever.[1] With man there is past, present, and future: with God the great I AM, it is the eternal NOW. God had no beginning. But there was for me a time when,

"God thought about me
And so I grew."

2. Time belongs only to this earthly, mortal life. When we die we shall pass from Time into Eternity. Our mortal is here clothed upon,[2] and we become immortal beings through Christ Who is our life.

[1] Heb. xiii: 8. [2] 2 Cor. v: 2.

Today and To-morrow belong to Time: in Eternity a thousand years are but as yesterday.

3. We believe that nothing happens by chance. We did not just happen to be born. The creation of a human soul in time is an expression of the Will of God. So we must seek to find out the Divine purpose as expressed in our creation. God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him, and to be the object of His love. "To find God is the true romance of every soul." To find Him in time, that we may possess Him through all Eternity. To begin here to know Him, that forever and forever our knowledge may grow wider and deeper. To love Him with that wonderful love that begins to dawn within us as the knowledge of the Divine Attributes is revealed to us day by day with the knowledge of experience, until we love Him more than Jonathan loved David — with that wonderful

love passing the love of women — with that deathless love from which neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us.[1]

4. The mind reels at the thought of Eternity. Eternity is forever and a day. The circle in art is but a poor symbol — it only appears to have neither beginning nor end. To realize Eternity we have to think back to a beginning that never was, through the ages of the ages, and to look forward to a future which is future only to us, but which to the Eternal is an ever present.

5. Resolve to live for Eternity — that is, to live in the constant hope of Eternal Life. Time is but for a moment. Pleasure is but for a moment. Sorrow is but for a moment. One day we shall fall asleep in Time, and when we waken, may that awak-

[1] Romans viii: 38, 39.

ening be in the light of the Land where there is no night.

> "O then the glory and the bliss,
> When all that pained or seemed amiss
> Shall melt with earth and sin away!
> When saints beneath their Saviour's eye,
> Fill'd with each other's company,
> Shall spend in love th' eternal day."
>
> — *Keble.*

XX

THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

I. TO EPHESUS

REVELATION ii: 1

1. The Epistles to the Seven Churches may be considered as of modern application to the life of the Christian today. The characters of the Old Testament, as well as of the New are all *types:* the story of the life of each is often an allegory or parable of man's life as it is today. Character develops

in us every day: so that the life of every day is of the utmost moment,

> "One step and then another, take thy way —
> Bear not thy yesterday into to-morrow;"

yet today often makes to-morrow what it is. Learn the value and importance of *trifles*, little things.

2. The Church in Ephesus was commended for her works, and labors, and patience. Very often we do poor work and hardly let ourselves exert ourselves sufficiently as we run our race, to know the agony and toil and weariness of labor. And impatience is one of our many national sins. The saints made haste slowly. The fever of hurry would often bring to-morrow into today. We seem sometimes to seek to force God's Hand — it is not our yearning desire to see God's Kingdom come — but we would bring things to a climax now, we cannot bear the things that are evil. We are often impatient with our neighbor, we

are impatient with ourselves — our progress in the development of character and virtue, with the poor use we make of grace — and if we would admit it, we are impatient with God because the thousand years of His eternal day always give us more time for working out our salvation, instead of less!

3. So we leave our first love, —

> "By many deeds of shame
> We learn that love grows cold;"

at certain milestones of our life we have paused, our hearts burning within us with ardent fervor. For a little while zeal has eaten us up, we have "boiled over" with enthusiasm. And then we have succumbed under the burden and heat of the day. We forget that God is faithful Who has promised. We lose the sense of obligation, responsibility. The novelty of our first love wears off, and we are in danger of losing our reward, in danger of becoming *lost souls*.

4. It is a good thing to make an Act of

Love every day. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works. . . . To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

II. TO SMYRNA

REVELATION ii: 8

1. The Epistles to the Seven Churches all teach us the true place of *works*. At the same time we learn that in themselves they are not sufficient. So faith without works is dead. Acceptable works must be the outcome of a right faith. The *quality* and the *value* of works depends upon one's *faith*. Believe rightly and you will *do* rightly. Be good and you will do good. Either, alone, is not enough. Many a morally irreproachable, God-fearing Christian is so dried up in his cold respectability and frigid re-

serve, that he is like a living corpse — he has faith, but because he does no works he is like a dead man!

2. (*a*) The Christians of Smyrna endured tribulation and poverty. These seem to be two of the attending satellites of most Catholic Christians. "Christian is my name and Catholic my surname," and Sister Poverty and Brother Tribulation are in the family. Saint Polycarp, who was a disciple of Saint John, was Bishop of Smyrna. Our religion to be worth anything to us must cost us something; to be worth a great deal it must cost us much. In a country where there is so much individualism in belief, and where the Catholic Church is still a vast and scattered missionary body, there still must be much individual persecution.

(*b*) Our country is a free country, and in religious matters we often hear freedom of choice much vaunted. But when a child in a family chooses to be a Catholic and re-

sponds to the Divine call, life in the home sometimes becomes difficult. The pain of the Cross, the *cost* of our faith, *pinches*. The saints counted all things loss for Christ's sake —literally they forsook father, and mother and brethren, and lands for Christ's sweet sake. Let us not shrink from the *ignominy* of being disciples of the hated Nazarene!

3. (*a*) Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Fear not at all. The kingdom of pain and the school of suffering relate us to a vast multitude, quite the largest part of the human family; in them we learn to acknowledge Christ our King and our Master. By bearing pain and enduring suffering we destroy the power of the devil, we overcome him. Satan could not understand the mystery of the Cross until on Calvary the Spirit of the Redeemer leapt from it and destroyed his power forever. So now the Sign of the Cross causes gnashing of teeth.

(*b*) Pain is a furnace, and suffering is like

the white heat of the refiner's fire, but from its midst comes forth the pure gold of holiness and perfection. Aubrey de Vere says that even

"Grief should be
Like joy, majestic, equable, sedate;
Confining, cleansing, raising, making free:
Strong to consume small troubles; to commend
Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end."

4. The charge to the Catholics of Smyrna has come down through the centuries, one of the best loved war-cries of the Church, a song of brave hearts and a pæan of valiant souls — a call to *fidelity* and *steadfastness*, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

5. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. There is no comforting hope of *annihilation* for impatient sinners or for those who will choose finally to reject Christ our Lord! But over those tried as were these of Smyrna, death and hell shall have no power. (See Rev. xxi: 8.)

6. Pray for

"The gift of seeing in the darkest night, the light beyond,
In bewildering labyrinths of life the one true way,
In pitiless despair's wild sea, the anchor of sure hope,
And always over all the Blessed Cross!"

III. TO PERGAMOS

Revelation ii: 12

1. No National Church is indefectible. Consider the possibility of the disintegration of *every* National Church now existent. As we look at the Church in the light of history, we see that as with nations and dynasties, so with many national churches, they have perished. But the Church herself cannot perish. At the last, though only a remnant remain, the faithful here upon earth, the members of Christ's mystical kingdom, shall be found still bearing their witness to the Truth. Yet while it is quite impossible for the sins of faith or practice, of a National Church, to affect the character of the whole

Church, disloyalty to the standards of the Faith might result in her visitation by the Divine vengeance, so that her candlestick might be removed. Such might be the result of works *without* a pure Faith.

2. The obliteration of the Seven Churches is not without deep significance. The sees were perhaps small, but some of their names are known throughout the world unto this day. The glories of Byzantium and ancient Rome are imperishable memories. In years to come, consider the possibility of what may happen to New York, London, Paris, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, Omaha. The greater a city is, as a mart of commerce, a seat of learning, or a centre of art and culture, the greater the danger under which the Church labors — because there surely will Satan's seat be set up. In such places it is always going to be hard for the Church to hold her own. This is life eternal, that

they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.[1] But in our great cities we find only a small number admitting this; the demands made upon those who make up the leaven of Christ's kingdom are such that few can bear the hard sayings of the Master of our destiny. In such places there is a call to heroic endeavor. Christ is in us the hope of glory — the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.[2]

3. (*a*) The Church in Pergamos did hold fast the name of Christ and did not deny the Faith, and bore the fruit of martyrdom, in the person of Antipas. But she allowed laxity of practice, and evidently condoned that which our Lord would not permit. The position of a national church on such a question as Marriage and Divorce, or the doctrine of the Christian Ministry, is so weighty that a mistake might be fatal to

[1] S. John xvii: 3. [2] Ibid xiv: 30.

her continuity. The doctrine of Apostolical Succession may seem secondary to some. Its abandonment would mean decline, sickness, death. The Vision of Unity has often been a *fata morgana*.

(*b*) Are the divisions in Christ's Church Militant an expression of the Divine Will, or are they the work of Satan who has nothing in the Prince of the Catholic Church? We know that they are the expression of self-will and pride, the result of impatience, and of a desire of some to hasten God's kingdom and to force His Hand! How often intelligent people say, "What difference does it make? If you try to live a good life and keep the Commandments, isn't one Church as good as another?" The Divine nature of *The Church* is wholly ignored or misunderstood. To be loyal Christians we must be loyal and obedient adherents of that visible Body which is here today with its divinely constituted Ministry and Sacra-

ments, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. To forego *one* of the vital conditions of unity with her, for the sake of union with any who by separation now disavow the principle of the necessity of that unity, would imperil the existence of any National Church — she would indeed then lose her candlestick.

4. The white stone and the new name promised to him that overcometh, are for those only who are true to Christ and His Church. Examine yourself on this question of loyalty. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

> "He is a slave who would not be
> In the right with two or three;
> He is a slave who would not choose
> Falsehood, slander, and abuse
> Sooner than meanly seem to shrink
> From the truth he needs must think."

IV. TO THYATIRA

Revelation ii: 18

1. Love enhanced the other virtues of the Church in Thyatira. But outside the city wall was a fane, erected to the sibyl Sambetha, in an enclosure known as the Chaldean court. In some manner the Church was involved in idolatrous practices — perhaps as churches today become culpable — by winking at evil doings. So the guilt of spiritual fornication and adultery — forms of idolatry — is laid against her.

2. Sins of the flesh particularly, try the faith and endurance of the devout. One effect of the Fall of Adam was to deflect the quiet streams of pure *affection* into turbulent, stormy torrents of *passion*. The thirst of the soul for God can never be satisfied outside of Himself. Passion enthrones self, as expressed by the importunate demands of the senses, which were given to

help us find God, and when we consent to its demands, we commit idolatry. Even when we know Jesus to be the Son of God, the Pure and Altogether Lovely One, passion surges like red blood into our eyes and we are sometimes blinded.

3. How the soul sometimes descends into the very depths of Satan, led by the leash of unlawful desire! But the never failing Divine Patience endures the wayward wanderings of our froward hearts, and again and again space for repentance is given us and prolonged. We must repent if at all before the time of our visitation ceases — lest we become like Esau.[1] We must be filled with holy fear lest even our children be seduced by the snares and allurements of the sorceress.

4. All the Churches shall know that I am He. Jesus is God. He is ever proving men as He searches the very heart and reins.

[1] Heb. xii: 17.

He knows what is in man. Now He that planteth and He that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.[1] We must hold fast until the Day of the Lord comes. Ours is the daily labor of love, to watch, to do the works, to be patient, to be faithful. The vessels of the potter — all devices of diabolical or human invention that would draw the soul from its appointed destiny — shall in the Day of the Lord be broken to shivers. He that overcometh . . . I will give him the Morning Star — He will Himself be the exceeding great reward of them that persevere unto the end. Pray that through all the mists of temptation you may never lose sight of the Light of the Morning Star!

[1] 1 Cor. iii: 8.

V. TO SARDIS

Revelation iii: 1

1. Sardis was the ancient capital of Lydia, and the city where Crœsus had once reigned as king. To the Church in Sardis Christ speaks: These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God. Jesus is Lord and God and possessed the Holy Spirit in His absolute fulness. So also the Holy Ghost is absolutely one, yet infinitely manifold in His operation. Seven is the mystical number signifying perfection, the number of the whole and perfect Church and the number of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in and fills each Church wholly and separately. So we read of the seven Spirits of God, as signifying the sevenfold operation of the One Spirit.

2. The Church in Sardis had a name — it was living but it was dead. Like many a soul in mortal sin! Like many a parish where the lamp has gone out because it has

not been kept filled with oil and the wick has not been kept trimmed. It is a great responsibility to have a reputation to sustain. Christians are charged with maintaining the honor of their Lord. They are therefore called upon frequently to rehearse the articles of their belief, to hear sermons, to be frequent and regular in the performance of their public duties as Christian-folk, to be punctilious in their observance of the Lord's Day, of the fasts and holy-days of the Christian Year, in the study of Holy Scripture, in prayer, and fasting, and almsgiving. If they have a name that they are living, and are dead, woe unto them.

3. Watchfulness is the ever-attendant watchword of Christian folk. What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch![1] Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Imperfec-

[1] S. Mark xiii: 37.

tion is the mark of all finite things. There can be no perfection apart from complete union with God. In the warfare of the Christian life there is no discharge until we lay down our guerdon. The work given to the Church in Sardis was imperfectly done, unfulfilled. Religion often has no heart because we have lost our zeal. To be zealous is to boil over with enthusiasm and interest.

4. The Master is come, and calleth for thee![1] Our Blessed Lord comes to and calls all the world: God called the world. And He calls each soul and He comes to each soul — to the truly converted, the really contrite heart, not only in judgment, but in mercy. His mercy is over all His works. But when He comes at the last it will be as a thief in the night. Watch, therefore!

5. There will always be a few which have not defiled their garments, to whom will cling no taint of deadly sin. And they

[1] S. John xi: 28.

shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment — the interior purity and holiness which adorned the soul in secret, shall be manifested before angels and men. Living perhaps a life quite unknown and hidden from the world, in eternity, the splendor of the saints of God shall shine forth as the sun, and they who here valiantly confessed the Name of Christ shall hear their names confessed before the Father and the whole company of Heaven.

VI. TO PHILADELPHIA

Revelation iii: 7

1. Philadelphia, the ancient city of Brotherly Love, was built by Attalus Philadelphus, King of Pergamos, who died B.C. 138. The Church in Philadelphia is addressed by Him that is Holy and True and

Who exercised authority — the key of David, over the House of David. Christ possessed the power of the keys and this power He transmitted to His Church. A great door and effectual [1] to the kingdom of Heaven has been opened by our Lord, and the power of the keys is committed to the priesthood of His Body Mystical who in the Person of Christ openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth.[2] Christ baptizes, Christ absolves, Christ is the Priest acting and working in every act of His ministerial priesthood.

2. The Church in Philadelphia was possessed of strength, she was loyal and steadfast in her adherence to that faith once for all delivered to the saints. She was in the position in which the Church today finds herself when she maintains the verities of the Catholic religion and the revealed doctrine of the Divinity of Christ — Jesus the

[1] 1 Cor. xvi: 9. [2] S. Matt. xvi: 19.

Eternal Son of God, God of God, by Whom all things were made — as against those who would claim the Name of Christians, yet at the same time deny His Divine Personality. We believe Jesus Christ to be God on the authority of the Catholic Church.

3. Every tongue shall confess at last, that Jesus is God, and the nations of the earth shall come and worship at His feet and know that He has loved them. Having this faith we can understand the martyr-spirit of the early days of Christianity and the heroism still shown in modern times as men and women go out to heathen lands, and into the waste places of our own semi-heathen country, to bear witness to the Truth and to work and pray for the salvation of the lost and erring. The trials we undergo must make us patient.

4. The Church is herself indefectible, she cannot perish. To those who persevere, when the final persecution comes, and

the nations of the world stand arrayed on the field of Armageddon against the remnant of the faithful, will be given the grace of final perseverance. Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. The gates of Hell shall not prevail against them! We do well to remember, too, that no man can be tempted above what he is able to bear.[1] Often we forget the Divine pledge that with every temptation will be provided a means to escape its power.

5. Behold, I come quickly: a thousand years in God's sight are but as yesterday to Him Who is the same, Yesterday, and Today, and Forever. The time is always short. We must hold fast the treasures of grace and prize them with jealous care, that no man take the crown of life eternal

[1] 1 Cor. x: 13.

prepared for the victor, for him who overcometh the world.

6. Here we are fellow-workers with Christ, and sharers in the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven which He has obtained for us. He that overcometh shall continue to share the ever new unfolding treasures prepared and awaiting those who go into the Life Everlasting at His Second Coming. The victorious warrior of God shall have written upon him the Name of God and the name of the city glorious, as he enters into the freedom of Jerusalem Shammah — "the Lord is there." And last of all, that new Name that no man knoweth but Jesus Himself — a Name of mystery yet to be revealed. The Rider upon the white horse goes forth conquering and to conquer. Pray for an increase of brotherly love between the nations of the earth.

VII. TO LAODICEA

Revelation iii: 14

1. The Epistle to the Church of self-satisfied, opulent Laodicea, is extraordinary for its contrasts. Christ Who is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the faithful and true Witness, By Whom all things were made and in Whom are all things, uses to this Church epithets that are terrifying in their severity, and then promises her rewards exceeding those promised to the other Churches. So is it that the greatest sinners — greatest because flagrant and notorious in their viciousness — may, by the power of grace, become great saints. The contrasts in the spiritual life are often extreme. Sinners sound the lowest depths. Saints climb the highest steeps. The sins of the woman in Simon's house were forgiven her because she loved much.[1]

[1] S. Luke vii: 47.

2. Lukewarmness is very often the curse of many Churches, congregations, souls. The zeal of Thine House hath eaten me up[1] — As a young man marrieth a virgin, even so shall thy sons marry thee[2] — I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts[3] — What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ[4] — Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life:[5] — where today is the spirit that brought forth from prophets and apostles these burning words! Here and there a Damien, a Hannington, a Kemper, a Hopkins, a Keble, a Pusey, a Seymour, a Rowe, a priest, a sister, a missionary, live and die for Jesus Christ and His Church. But most of us must confess lukewarmness.

3. Rich in worldly goods the temptation is to say, O soul, thou hast much goods.[6] Wearing purple and fine linen we may forget the needy — Christ and His poor laid

[1] Psalms lxix: 9. [2] Isa. lxii: 5. [3] 1 Kings xix.
[4] Philipp. iii: 7. [5] 1 Tim. vi: 12. [6] S. Luke xii: 19.

at our gates. We do not know that without heavenly riches we are indeed wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, that *without Christ we are nothing.* "To find God is the true romance of every soul." Alas! if we know not God.

4. There comes a cry from the mountain tops, Awake! thou that sleepest.[1] Then comes to the lukewarm Church, to the cold-hearted Christian, rebuke and chastisement. Let us learn to look upon the chastisements that afflict us as the rebuke of wounded Love. Grief and Pain are often the handmaids of Penitence. Sometimes it is only when bereavement and loss have stricken us, that out of the evil brought upon us we see a vision of the Uncreated Beauty and hear the knocking at the door and the Voice of the Beloved, and open unto Him.

5. The message to Laodicea reminds us also that there is always hope. Out of the

[1] Ephes. v: 14.

ashes of Penitence may bloom the rose of Love. It is to those who are the sorest smitten that the Voice of the Beloved sounds the sweetest; it is to the most wayward one that the smile of Jesus kindles with most loving tenderness.

6. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on My throne even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne The victor is to share with the King of Kings the fruits of His victory.

Pray for grace to be diligent. Pray for zeal. Pray for ever deepening contrition and increasing love. The more our sorrow deepens, the more we love. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself.

What a different world this would be if we *did* love our neighbor as ourself!

XXI

THE LAST THINGS

HEBREWS IX: 27

1. We affirm our belief that Christ shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead. This truth is kept before us constantly; there is no escaping it. Life is short. Death and the Judgment are inevitable. It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment.[1] One morning I shall waken and for me there shall be no to-morrow. We must work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.[2]

"Our life is but a fleeting span,"

like a flower — like a shadow — as a dream — so soon passeth it away! How strange it is that the glamour of "this world" should be so fascinating, so enthralling. I am in a

[1] Heb. x: 27. [2] S. John ix: 4.

very real sense the captain of my soul. I may become the servant of Jesus Christ, or the tool of Satan. I may climb the heavenly steeps, or descend into the lowest abyss of darkness. My life can be occupied with my Father's business, or be idle and purposeless. I have at least one talent. I may use it or not as I please. My daily life, lived with or without God, is making my heaven or hell. Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice.

2. Death, be it remembered, is the wages of sin.[1] God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own eternity. Nevertheless through envy of the devil came death into the world. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.[2]

[1] Rom. vi: 23. [2] Rom. v: 12.

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Man's life in the flesh is a period of probation. Probation ends at death.[1] The soul passes from the body to be scrutinized immediately in the Particular Judgment. In the first five minutes after death, the soul learns its final destiny. These will be crucial moments. The unerring eye of the Judge of all men will pierce the soul, and the thoughts and words and deeds of a lifetime will be adjudicated. Our day of reckoning will be the day of our death. Judgment will be rendered and our state will become fixed. The soul of the redeemed man will pass into Purgatory, that intermediate state in which all stains of earthly sin are purged and done away, and there be made ready for its final abode in the heavenly Jerusalem. We ought to thank God devoutly that there is a Purgatory.

3. The day of the Lord, the day of the Last Judgment, will come at the end of this

[1] Eccles. xi: 3.

world. Then the earth and the sea shall give up their dead, and together we shall all stand before the judgment seat, the great white throne. It will be the world's Easter Day. The angels of the Judgment will have summoned them that are asleep from the four corners of the earth. The Justice, and Wisdom, and Love, and Mercy of God will then be vindicated, at the mouth of sinners as well as saints, and time shall be no more. Those who have lost God shall go away into the outer darkness — Hell; those who have finally passed through the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, shall be caught up and enter through the gates into the Beautiful City, and forever enjoy the Vision of God — Heaven.

"Oh, what were life, if life were all!"

4. Pray for wisdom, that we may never lose God. Here, we are pilgrims of the night. Heaven is our real home. There shall be no

night there.[1] We shall be as the angels. Our happiness will then be supreme, and body, soul, and spirit shall rejoice through all Eternity.

XXII

CHRISTMAS

S. Luke ii: 6–19

1. Consider the expectancy of the world, just prior to the Holy Nativity; the world's need of a Redeemer. The whole creation groaned and travailed in pain together. The voice of the sybil had been heard across the Ægean Sea, "Great Pan is dead." The fulness of time was approaching. The people of the Hebrews had preserved in the Ancient Church the great types of sacrificial worship, shadowing forth the Christian Sacrifice. Roman civilization had built the roads to make possible the carrying of

[1] Rev. xxii: 5.

the Gospel to all nations. The Greek language, with its marvellous subtlety and felicity of expression, and its profound philosophy, was ready to pass on the Christian revelation. The heart of the world was athirst for God; He was still, to many, the unknown God.[1]

2. Then was God manifested in the flesh. Blessed Mary, pure and undefiled — Ever Virgin — acquiesced in the Will of God, and the Word was made flesh.[2] Then on a winter's night, while shepherds watched their flocks, Jesus was born, and Love lay sleeping in the arms of His dear Mother, a Babe wrapped in swaddling bands, in the stable at Bethlehem.[3]

> "The world in solemn stillness lay
> To hear the angels sing."

We wonder what their heavenly music was like? The glory of the Lord and the peace of the world was the burden of the angelic

[1] Acts xvii: 23. [2] S. John i: 14. [3] S. Luke ii: 17.

song. We may share the eager joy of the shepherds and unite with them in their act of worship. *Venite adoremus!*

3. Those present at the Holy Nativity may be divided into three groups. (*a*) Blessed Mary and Saint Joseph her spouse; (*b*) the Angels, and (*c*) the shepherds. The Incarnation united the Divine and Human natures in the Person of the Eternal Child.

(*a*) Saint Mary was the chosen vessel — the God-bearer. All generations shall call her blessed; yet her meek spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour. Humble, albeit of David's royal line, she was exalted to a higher privilege than ever before enjoyed by the daughters of men. The Child Jesus was her only son; He was the Son of God and Mary.[1] Saint Joseph was the Spouse of the Blessed Virgin and the Guardian of the Holy Child. Together these three formed the Holy Family. Together they journeyed to Egypt and

[1] S. Luke i: 32, 35.

again, after Herod's death, returned to Nazareth. Out of Egypt God called His Son.[1] The perfect Pattern of obedience, Jesus was subject to His earthly protectors, and increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.[2]

(*b*) The Holy Angels had their part in every period of the divine history. Saint Gabriel was the Angel of the Annunciation.[3] Angels warned the shepherds of the Saviour's birth.[4] Angels ministered to Him in His temptation.[5] Angels guarded the tomb.[6] Angels told the Apostles of the Resurrection, after they had rolled the rock away from the door of the sepulchre. Today they attend Him as they throng His altars where He holds His earthly court, and with them we unite our worship, with angels and archangels and with all the company of Heaven.

[1] S. Matt. ii: 15. [2] S. Luke ii: 52. [3] S. Luke i: 26.
[4] Ibid ii: 10. [5] S. Matt. iv: 11. [6] S. Luke xxiv: 4.

(*c*) The shepherds may represent those who are ever ready to hear the inner voice and to respond to the movements of the Holy Spirit. Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, they said, and see this thing which is come to pass.[1] So they found the Eternal Child, the Wisdom of the Ages, incarnate in the manger.

4. In His Sweet Sacrament Divine shall all pure hearts find Him, in His Glorified Humanity, as they draw near to Him in their Christmas communion. Hid in His earthly home, let us pay to Him our most devout homage; and as we receive Him, may He find in every heart a mansion prepared for Himself.

[1] S. Luke ii: 15.

XXIII

CHILDHOOD AND MOTHERHOOD

S. Luke ii: 19

1. Two conditions of life are conspicuous at this time of the year— childhood and motherhood. Two figures preëminently claim our attention — the Holy Child Jesus, the Blessed Mother Mary. The eastern country looms large, and Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth each claim our notice.

(*a*) Bethlehem of Judea! A winter's night. The shining stars gleaming in the heavens. The crowded inn, occupied by the wealthy. No room for the Holy Child. Outside, a lowly stable — the birth-chamber of One Whose name is Wonderful.[1] A maid brings forth her First-born, and then He is wrapped in swaddling bands, and the near-by manger becomes the Infant's crib. Angels sing in

[1] Isa. ix: 6.

the air above Him. Shepherds come and adore, and later, in the fields, commune about this strange happening. And the Eternal Child sleeps sweetly, and again, cries and croons and nestles, as babies will, against His Mother's breast, and there finds contentment and satisfaction.

(*b*) Egypt.[1] Type of sin and darkness. We picture the Flight. We see the tender solicitude of Saint Joseph and his watchful care. We ponder upon the seclusion of Innocence, and contrast its mild sweetness and nameless charm, with the sturdy achievements of Sainthood, won after warfare and blood, temptation, strife, and hardship, and trial.

(*c*) Nazareth.[2] The days of His youth. The subjection of loving obedience. The sanctification of the Common Life. The honorable estate of labor. Work — a trade — like our religion, to be learned. Work done well and faithfully. Tasks finished,

[1] S. Matt. ii: 14. [2] S. Luke ii: 52.

none left incomplete. The daily unfolding of "the white flower of a blameless life." Consider the vast possibilities of childhood; its singular beauty; its strange power of attractiveness; its unique joys. Weakness triumphing over might. Consider its rare and unsullied loveliness.

2. (*a*) Motherhood spells sacrifice. The Blessed Mother had learned obedience in her home and in the Temple courts. She was of a royal line. They rule best who first obey. A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand.[1] The devotion of Blessed Mary was hallowed; the deep things of God she pondered in her heart. Like many a maiden she peered through the mists that veil hidden mysteries, and she ever sought Him Whom her soul loved. So when the Will of God was revealed to her at the Annunciation, she was ready to acquiesce at once: Be it unto me according to Thy word,[2]

[1] Psalms lxxxiv: 10. [2] S. Luke i: 38.

was her answer to the Angel's message. The import of that message was more than she could understand, but she doubted not. So the dream of every Jewish maiden found its realization in the Lily of Israel, and the crowning joy of a woman's life — motherhood — was hers.

(*b*) Motherhood involves pain, joy, and sorrow. But heaviness only endures for a night, joy cometh in the morning. What joy was hers! She was *Theotokos* — God-bearer; henceforth she was Holy Mary, Mother of God, for from the moment of the Incarnation God was manifest in the flesh. How her spirit rejoiced! How her soul sang Magnificat![1] In the eyes of her Son she saw heavenly visions. She saw Him in the Temple, the Wisdom of the Ages, speaking as never man spake. Then sorrow came and Calvary, and there stood by the Cross, Mary the Mother of Jesus. The Cross hal-

[1] S. Luke i: 46.

lows motherhood. It lies between childhood and sin. It is the medicine of the world. O Blessed Cross!

Let us reverence all childhood and motherhood for the sake of the Mother and her Divine Son.

XXIV

SAINT MARY THE VIRGIN: MOTHER OF GOD

S. Luke i: 26–36

1. Every day, all over the world, in nearly every Christian city, rings forth the Angelus bell, sounding its mystical three-times-three. At six in the morn, at noon, and at six at eventide, the world is thus called by the bells to rejoice and praise God for the Incarnation of the Eternal Word. At the hour of Prime, when the Divine Redeemer was taken before Pilate; at the hour of Sext when He

hung upon the Tree of Calvary, and the last Three Hours dragged out their weary length; and at the Vesper hour, when the Sacred Body was taken down from the Rood by loving hands, and laid in the sepulchre, we are called to remember God's great love for man, love so great that He spared not His own Son.[1] So the triple tolling of the bell is in honor of the Blessed Three, just as the nine-fold Kyrie (used when the Decalogue is not said) is a three-times-three in honor of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

2. (*a*) As we recall this divine mystery, we are also reminded of the unique place which a human will was permitted to have in the accomplishment of the Eternal Will of God. The name of Mary should ever be said with the angel's "Blessed," and the "Ave" said with

". . . all but adoring love."

The name of Mary is like the dominant seventh in the harmony of the music of the

[1] Rom. viii: 32.

Incarnation. It was an angel's voice that said the first *Ave*. Since then, countless myriads of angels and saints have sung the glory and praises of the Ever-Virgin Mother. (That she was Ever-Virgin even Renan admits. He says: "the proofs of our Lord being the only child of Mary are conclusive.") The Anglican *sense* of veneration needs cultivation and education, especially in America. English-speaking Catholics often speak with a needlessly apologetic tone, when they venture to extol the Virgin-Mother, that

> "Mother whose virgin bosom was uncrost
> With the least shade of thought to sin allied!
> Woman! above all women glorified;
> Our tainted nature's solitary boast;
> Purer than foam on central ocean tost;
> Brighter than Eastern skies at daybreak strewn
> With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon
> Before her wane begins on Heaven's blue coast."
>
> — *Wordsworth.*

(*b*) Jesus, as the Eternal Word, was ever in the Bosom of His Father.[1] When the ful-

[1] S. John i: 18.

ness of time arrived, He became flesh, and for a while rested within the Bosom of Blessed Mary. By the operation of the Holy Ghost, He was made Very Man of the substance of the Virgin Mary His Mother, without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin. Of this pure Virgin was He born on Christmas Day. It was of her untainted blood and undefiled flesh, that the Sacred Humanity was formed. Of all creatures, the Ever-Virgin Mother was marked by each Person of the Blessed Trinity, with an unique and indelible character. He that is mighty magnified the daughter of David's royal line. Yet, still a creature, her lowly spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour.

3. Catholics can hardly love and venerate the Mother of God too much. We stop short only of giving her *divine* honor. We worship God alone with the worship we may not offer to any creature — *latria*. To Saint Mary, Queen of Saints —

"Lily of Eden's fairest shade,"

we give the highest worship we are allowed to pay to any creature — *hyper-dulia:*

> "Angel nor saint His Face may see
> Apart from what He took from thee,
> How may we choose but name thy name
> Echoing below their glad acclaim
> In holy Creeds? . . .
> 'Hail Mary, full of grace;' O welcome sweet
> Which daily in all lands all Saints repeat."
>
> — *Keble.*

4. (*a*) Only ignorance, or prejudice that is invincible, can hinder the faithful from, sometimes at least, invoking the intercessions of the Virgin Mother and the Blessed Saints. We ignore the brightest aspect of the Communion of Saints if, believing in the intercession of the Saints — of which doctrine, for reasonable people, there is abundant proof — we never ask for it. If, like Saint Paul, we ask the prayers of earthly saints, how much more may our prayers be enriched if we still ask for the prayers of saints departed and in glory!

A cloud of witnesses surround us. We are

in communion with the spirits of just men made perfect. Let us invoke their prayers. Saint Chrysostom says: "Let us flee to the intercession of the Saints, and let us beseech them to pray for us." And Saint Jerome: "If the Apostles and Martyrs while still in the body could pray for others, when they still ought to be full of care for themselves, how much more can they do so after they have been crowned in victories and triumphs!" Saint Cyril of Jerusalem writes: "We all of us supplicate Thee and offer to Thee this sacrifice that we may also commemorate those who have fallen asleep before us; firstly Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, to the end that God, by their prayers and intercessions, may accept our petitions."

(*b*) Let us ask God to open the eyes of our souls, that we may see the beauty of this doctrine, and let us begin now to say, at least daily, the Hail Mary!

XXV

IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST

PSALMS xxvii: 8

1. Consider how all through life the Christian is looking forward to that moment in the future, when, this earthly life ended, he shall, if he persevere, as the exceeding great reward of his love and service, see the King in His beauty, behold forever the Face of Jesus Christ. Do we ever imagine what that Face will be like? The Face which looked into His Mother's eyes; the Eyes that looked at Peter and searched the soul of Judas, and that wept over Jerusalem, and at the tomb of Lazarus? We know that, when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is[1]: we shall see that beautiful Face that was often wet with "the salt tears dropped for others' sorrows

[1] S. John iii: 2.

and lighted by the fire of self-sacrifice." What have we done for Him?

2. Consider that although we now walk as seeing Him Who is invisible,[1] by faith, not by sight, all that we do is seen and known of Him. Thou, God, seest me. He is about our paths, and about our bed, and spiest out all our ways.[2] Every day we live in the Face of Jesus Christ. In our prayers and meditations we are looking into that Face. We catch our joy from its Transfiguration.

3. We speak of living or of doing such and such a thing in the face of the world. But every man lives secretly in a world that is all his own, where the eye of man never penetrates and where there are secret fastnesses where the eye of the vulture hath not seen.[3] In this hidden world we live our real life. In it we ourselves know just what we are. There our thoughts move untrammelled, there we commune with our own

[1] Heb. xi: 27. [2] Psalms cxxxix: 3. [3] Job xxviii: 7.

hearts, there we work out strange problems and do strange things. Consider how this hidden life of the soul is of tremendous importance to Christians. The *inner* life must be lived in the Face of Jesus Christ, the Unseen Watcher. In Heaven, in the depths of Hell, in the remotest places there always is that Face, and there are those Eyes searching, warning, rebuking, encouraging, pleading, attracting us, drawing us, and, if we will, holding us close and yet closer in tender fellowship — lifting us to heavenly places, drawing us out of the abyss.

4. We shall be like Him. Meditate then before the Crucifix until you see those Eyes, and until you hear those Lips speak to you. Ask for the power of Renunciation until you, too, can say, Nothing but Thyself, O Lord.

XXVI

DEATH

HEBREWS ix: 27

1. (*a*) Consider the universal experience of nature, of animate and inanimate things. God created man to be immortal and to be an image of His own Eternity. Nevertheless, through envy of the devil came Death into the world — so we read in the Book of Wisdom.[1]

(*b*) We think of Eden, that fair garden of delights, where Adam walked and talked with God. We can elaborate the most exquisite pastoral idyl, with Eden as the scene of action. There we find man coming from God — the crowning act of His creation. There we see the creation of Eve — the mother of all living. There we see the coming of Love, for a while holy and undefiled. There was the most perfect earthly felicity.

[1] Wisdom ii: 23, 24.

(*c*) Then there comes into the Garden Satan — the fallen Lucifer — he whom the Son of God saw as lightning fall from Heaven.[1] As is in the power of angels, the Devil now comes disguised, as a serpent, more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.[2] He finds Eve gazing upon the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God has declared the fruit it bears forbidden. Yet, and how feminine! Eve's curiosity has been excited — the lust of the eye! Study the colloquy between Eve and the Serpent. It is a story of age-old significance. Eve allows herself to be deceived. How like ourselves today! Curiosity becomes covetousness. The pride of life — she would have herself and Adam be as gods! She took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

(*d*) It was a fatal meal. How much harm

[1] S. Luke x: 8. [2] Gen. iii: 1.

may come from unrestrained eating or drinking. Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. Idle curiosity gazing at things forbidden, listening to the voice of temptation, disallowing the commandments of God, yielding of the will, the act of sin, and then the instant coming of the sense of shame — its first blush! Then its fearful and far-reaching results. The pleasure of labor becomes toil, and there follow in the wake of that Tremendous Trifle — that one small act of disobedience — pain and sorrow, the seven deadly sins in all their mysterious and awful ramifications, Pride, Envy, Anger, Covetousness, Lust, Gluttony, Sloth. The peace of Eden is gone. There Adam no more may remain. And then there follows that dreadful scene; Abel is slain, and Cain, murderer and outcast, wanders abroad. Through envy of the devil came Death into the world, sickness and pain, misery and adversity.

2. Consider death, therefore, as a penalty — the wages of sin.[1] A sting forever to wound and hurt our dearest and our best. Stalking in spectral form among those gathered at every feast, grim, remorseless, insistent, — the envy of Satan claiming with the wide swath of his sickle, child and mother, wife or brother, lover or friend. The innocent and guilty alike — every man must taste of death.

3. (*a*) Then consider how Christ Jesus our Saviour has overcome death for us, how He has really taken away its sting, and sweetened its bitterness, so that if we die in Christ, we are but falling asleep. For the penitent Christian death must lose a large measure of its blackness. Our Lord has brought life and immortality to light.[2]

(*b*) Death henceforth is an incident in the soul's experience. We shall pass through its gate, but as we pass, its darkness shall pass

[1] Rom. vi: 23. [2] 2 S. Tim. i: 10.

away, and we shall enter the domain in which dwells the Eternal, in that radiance of light supernal which no man can approach unto.[1]

4. So as we contemplate death, let us rid ourselves of its terrors, as we have faith in the merit of the Cross of Christ. He died for us. Learn of Him to live, day by day. Learn of Him to die. Calvary is the pattern deathbed. There we learn to forgive our enemies and to pray for them! There we learn to commit all earthly cares to His Divine Providence. There we learn that whenever the lost sheep may come back the Good Shepherd will lay it on His shoulder rejoicing. There we learn that we must strive to run with patience the race that is set before us, enduring the cross, despising the shame. There we learn to die with an Act of Faith and a shout of victory on our lips. There we learn that as we pass through the grave and gate of death, our sorrow shall

[1] 1 S. Tim. vi: 16.

be turned into joy; and that though we must pass through the sorrows of the world, heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning — in the morning of that eternal Easter Day when Death shall be no more. The gift of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ.[1]

XXVII

A MOUNTAIN REVERIE

When I awoke this morning the sun had just risen. One of the windows of my room, in a little cottage on one of the White Mountains, looks out toward the northwest. As I opened my eyes I noticed the light, and the unusual brightness of the sky, for the weather had not been clear for several days. Then as I looked out and down toward the valleys beneath, I saw something I had never seen

[1] Rom. vi: 23.

before. I looked out on what was apparently a wide-spreading lake of light gray, level, *water*. There was the dip in the hill below my cottage. I could hear the whistle of the early morning train some six miles away. There were the treetops in the foreground, as usual. But beyond, filling in every valley and cove as far as the eye could see, was this wide-spreading even expanse of — not sea, but *cloud* which, owing to atmospheric pressure and the condition of temperature, had settled like one great level of dull gray water. It was so strange that it took several seconds for me to realize what it was, and that instead of the country having become inundated, I was looking out upon a sea of cloud. Presently the placid surface became ruffled, as though unseen hands were ploughing great furrows across it. And as the cloud slowly lifted, I thought about the Spirit of God brooding upon the face of the waters at Creation, and of the

Birth of Dawn, and all the strange mystery of Life. "In Thy Light shall we see light." The sea broke up and flitted away into the sky in fleecy cloudlets, as though the Voice of the Eternal had sounded in the World of Unborn Children, and summoned them one by one to the experiences of the Upper World.

THE SINGER'S HILLS

He dwelt where level lands lay low and drear,
Long stretches of waste meadow pale and sere,
With dull seas languid tiding up and down,
Turning the lifeless sands from white to brown, —
Wide barren fields for miles and miles, until
The pale horizon walled them in, and still
No lifted peak, no slope, not even mound
To raise and cheer the weary eye was found.

From boyhood up and down these dismal lands,
And pacing to and fro the barren sands,
And always gazing, gazing seaward, went
The Singer. Daily with the sad winds blent
His yearning voice.
"There must be hills," he said.
"I know they stand at sunset, rosy red,
And purple in the dewy shadowed morn;
Great forest trees like babes are rocked and borne
Upon their breasts, and flowers like jewels shine
Around their feet, and gold and silver line
Their hidden chambers, and great cities rise
Stately where their protecting shadow lies,
And men grow brave and women are more fair
'Neath higher skies, and in the clearer air!"
One day thus longing, gazing, lo! in awe
Made calm by ecstasy, he sudden saw,

Far out to seaward, mountain peaks appear,
Slow rising from the water pale and clear.
Purple and azure, there they were, as he
Had faithful yearning visions they must be;
Purple and azure and bright rosy red,
Like flashing jewels, on the sea they shed
Their quenchless light.
Great tears ran down
The Singer's cheeks, and through the lusty
town,
And all across the dreary meadow lands,
And all along the dreary lifeless sands,
He called aloud.
"Ho! tarry! tarry ye!
Behold those purple mountains in the sea!"
The people saw no mountains!
"He is mad!"
They careless said, and went their way and
had
No further thought of him.
And so, among
His fellows' noisy, idle crowding throng,

The Singer walked, as strangers walk who
speak
A foreign tongue and have no friend to seek.
And yet the silent joy which filled his face
Sometimes their wonder stirred a little
space,
And following his constant seaward look,
One wistful gaze they also seaward took.
One day the Singer was not seen. Men said
That as the early day was breaking red,
He rowed far out to sea, rowed swift and
strong,
Toward the spot where he had gazed so long.
Then all the people shook their heads, and
went
A little sadly, thinking he had spent
His life in vain, and sorry they no more
Should hear his sweet mad songs along their
shore.
But when the sea with sunset hues was
dyed,
A boat came slowly drifting with the tide,

Nor oar nor rudder set to turn or stay,
And on the crimson deck the Singer lay.
"Ah, he is dead," some cried. "No! he but sleeps,"
Said others, "madman that he is, joy keeps
Sweet vigils with him now."
The light keel grazed
The sands; alert and swift the Singer raised
His head, and with red cheeks and eyes aflame
Leaped out, and shouted loud, and called by name
Each man, and breathlessly his story told.
"Lo, I have landed on the hills of gold!
See, these are flowers, and these are fruits, and these
Are boughs from off the giant forest trees;
And these are jewels which lie loosely there,
And these are stuffs which beauteous maidens wear!"
And staggering he knelt upon the sands
As laying burdens down.
But empty hands

His fellows saw, and passed on smiling. Yet,
The ecstasy in which his face was set
Again smote on their hearts with sudden sense
Of half involuntary reverence.
And some said, whispering, "Alack, is he
The madman? Have ye never heard there be
Some spells which make men blind?"
And thenceforth they
More closely watched the Singer day by day,
Till finally they said, "He is not mad.
There be such hills, and treasure to be had
For seeking there! We too without delay
Will sail."
And of the men who sailed that way,
Some found the purple mountains in the sea,
Landed, and roamed their treasure countries free,
And drifted back with brimming laden hands.
Walking along the lifeless, silent sands,

The Singer, gazing ever seaward, knew,
Well knew the odors which the soft wind blew
Of all the fruits and flowers and boughs they bore.
Standing with hands stretched eager on the shore,
When they leaped out, he called, "Now God be praised,
Sweet comrades, were they then not fair?"
Amazed,
And with dull scorn, the other men who brought
No treasures, found no mountains, and saw naught
In these men's hands, and running to and fro
As men unloading argosies whose freight
Of gorgeous things bewildered by its weight.
Tireless the great years waxed; the great years waned;
Slowly the Singer's comrades grew and gained

Till they were goodly number.
No man's son
Could hurt or hinder them. No pity born
Of it could make them blush, or once make less
Their joys estate; and as for loneliness
They knew it not.
Still rise the magic hills
Purple and gold and red; the shore still thrills
With fragrance when the sunset winds begin
To blow and waft the subtle odors in
From treasure-laden boats that drift, and bide
The hours and moments of the wave and tide,
Laden with fruits and boughs and flowers rare,
And jewels such as monarchs do not wear,
And costly stuffs which dazzle in the sight
Stuffs wrought for purest virgin, bravest knight;

And men with cheeks all red, and eyes
aflame,
And hearts that call to hearts by brothers'
name,
Still leap out on the silent lifeless sands,
And staggering with over-burdened hands
Joyous lay down the treasures they have
brought,
While smiling, pitying, the world sees naught!

Helen Jackson.

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